1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL

THE Vedda country at the present day is limited to a roughly triangular tract lying between the eastern slopes of the central mountain *massif* and the sea. This area of about 2400 square miles is bounded on the west by the Mahaweli Ganga, from the point where, abandoning its eastern course through the mountains of the Central Province, the river sweeps northwards to the sea. A line from this great bend passing eastwards through Bibile village (on the Badulla-Batticaloa road) to the coast will define the southern limits of the Vedda country with sufficient accuracy, while its eastern limit is the coast. So defined it includes the greater part of the Eastern Province, about a fifth of Uva and a small portion of that part of the North Central Province known as Tamankaduwa, and is traversed by a single high road capable of taking wheeled traffic. This runs from Badulla, the capital of Uva, lying at the foot of the central mountain mass of the island, to the coast a few miles to the north of Batticaloa, the capital of the Eastern Province.

Excepting only the mountain scenery of Upper Uva and the Central Province, the Vedda country even in its present diminished form presents every variety of scenery met with in Ceylon, including alike the magnificent Uva park lands and the sandy mangrove-fringed flats of the Eastern coast. Within its borders is situated Mahayangana (Alutnuwara) the ancient assembling place of the Yakkas where, according to the Mahawansa, Buddha appeared and struck terror into their hearts before propounding his doctrines to the hosts of *deva* who

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-S (1907-1908) 1911
AXS Vedda AXS

133 height. Clear rock-strewn streams abound, their banks
137 brightened by the deep green leaves and the bright red flowers of the *ratmal* (*Ixora coccinea*). Scattered masses of rock often of great size form convenient shelters for the Veddas, and assist the rapid drainage of the country, which does not become water-logged even during torrential rains. This beautiful country is rich in game. To the east, where many Veddas have drifted, the jungle is thicker, the land lies lower, and is generally less healthy. The Nuwaragala Hills to the north of the Nilgala ranges are perhaps the wildest part of the island and are more densely clothed in jungle, but there are plenty of streams, while the slope of the country permits of ready drainage.

The coastal zone north of Batticaloa inhabited by the coast Veddas is flat and sandy, and the vegetation though dense is often less tall and less abundant than in other parts of the country. Salt water marshes are common, and the country is cut into by numerous lagoons and creeks, often bounded by a fringe of mangroves which stretches some distance up the mouths of the rivers. Although this area may now, and
131 for yet a few years, be rightly called the Vedda country it must
161 not be thought that any considerable number of its inhabitants
563 are Veddas, or that they exercise any territorial or political influence; on the contrary, they constitute an insignificant fraction of the Tamil and Sinhalese inhabitants before whom they are rapidly disappearing, partly by intermarriage and absorption, partly owing to misery and a high death rate brought about by sheer inability to cope with the new state of affairs that the increased settlement of this, the wildest part of the island, has brought about.

Formerly the Vedda country is known to have embraced
131 the whole of the Uva, and much of the Central and North
175 Central Provinces, while there is no reason to suppose that their territory did not extend beyond these limits. Indeed there is no reasonable doubt that the Veddas are identical with the "Yakkas" of the Mahavansa and other native chronicles.

175 The seventh chapter of the Mahawansa relates the arrival in Ceylon, B.C. 543, of Vijaya who married Kuweni an aboriginal princess (*Yakkini*) and by her assistance destroyed a great

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

those only who are the most barbarous, who have preserved in all essentials their isolation from other races intact, that we must expect to find the most marked peculiarities.

The term Veddah—or Weddah—in itself, indicates no particular race. It simply means "a hunter", and is, in India, applied to aboriginal or barbarous tribes generally.*

In this sense, a great portion of the population of the eastern parts of Ceylon appears, at some period or another, to have been so called. There are still extensive districts known as "Weddirata", or the country of the Veddahs, the inhabitants of which, although they are, owing to the remoteness of their situation, less civilized than the bulk of the people of the island, are not Veddahs, but Singhalese, in kindred, religion, and customs.

It is highly probable that the people of these remote districts and of others, where Veddah descent is still claimed, are more directly derived from the race which originally stocked the island than those who inhabit such parts of it as were more accessible to the settlers from Continental India, who, in process of time superseded the aborigines.†

But the people distinguished in Ceylon, by the name of Veddahs—wholly distinct, as I have said, even from those who, though now Singhalese, yet describe themselves as descended from Veddah ancestors, are to be found in the districts of Batti-

---

* Weddâ (Singhalese) an archer; some trace it to Bedda (Jungle). Introduction to Alwis' Sidath Sangarawa.

Vedân (Tamil), a hunter—one who lives in the woods; a name given to rude tribes, aborigines in the Indian peninsula. Vedan (Tamil), corruptly Vaidan, Veddah, also Beddah, or Weden—a hunter, a fowler; a name given to wild tribes, inhabiting the hills and forests of the south of India almost in a state of nature—probably the aboriginal race of the peninsula. Prof. Wilson's *Glossary of Revenue and Judicial Terms.* The word Veddah is still used in Ceylon as a hunter, and so applied to persons, not "Veddah" in the limited sense of the word.

† The Weddirates were, under the native government, exempted from all service save military—the most honourable; and rendered tribute to the king, of beeswax, dried flesh, and honey, which was continued for some time after we obtained possession of the Kandyan provinces. But the inhabitants of these districts marry and associate with those of the adjoining districts, and are apparently the same people. There may exist some ethnical difference; indeed, I think even an unscientific eye can detect a difference in the appearance, not only of these people, but of the Wanniahs of the northern and central parts of Ceylon, when compared with the ordinary natives. I have tried to obtain skulls of the different races, of which there are many in the island, viz., Tamils, Moors, Singhalese of the low country and of the Kandyan provinces, the people of the Weddiratas—Wanniahs of Newerakalawiya and Batticalas—Mookwas of the north-west and east provinces, Malays, Goorowas, Rhodias, etc., but it is most difficult to obtain them. The subject may be worthy of the attention of the Ethnological Society, though beside the object of this paper.

2:Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

calca and Badulla. The largest Veddah population is in the former district, and these are they of whom Tennent principally writes, but they are by no means the wildest specimens of the race. They have not maintained so complete an isolation from other races as those I am about to describe, and consequently are not worthy of the same attention.*

It is the "Wilder Sort" of Veddahs, as Knox calls them, of whom I desire to place on record an accurate description, before they quite pass away and are forgotten.

They roam about through the park-like district of Nilgala, which presents, of its kind, perhaps the loveliest scenery in this beautiful island, and wander among the forests of Bintenne—that "Land of Bintan all covered with mighty woods and filled with abundance of deer", where Knox tells us these dreaded "Wild Men" dwelt.

It would be difficult to conceive more barbarous types of the human race than they present. Yet there are degrees even in *their* barbarism, for those of Nilgala are wilder than their brethren of Bintenne. They are fewer in number, and more diminutive in stature. They are distributed through their lovely country in small septs, or families, occupying generally caves in the rocks, though some have little bark huts. They depend almost solely on hunting for their support,† and hold little communication even with each other.

Few in number as they are,—they did not exceed seventy-two persons in 1858,—still no other human beings are to be found for many miles round their habitations, and this seclusion has caused them to retain peculiarities which are fast disappearing, or have already disappeared from among even the wildest of Bintenne.‡

There, there are both wild and settled Veddahs. Of the latter

* See Tennent's remarks on the late Mr. Atherton's praiseworthy and successful labours in civilizing the Veddahs of the Batticaloa district, where there are now only some two hundred and fifty who, having resisted all his efforts to improve them, still live in caves near the rock called Gunner's Quoin, and in Palla Palata of the Batticaloa Bintenna. I have been in communication with Mr. Birch, the present agent for government in that district, and, from specimens of their *patois* which he sent me, and which greatly resembles the Singhalese usually spoken, in those very words in which, in the Badulla district, the Veddah dialect differs from it, I am justified in describing them as having had, in some period of their history, more intercourse with the Singhalese than those of whom I am writing.

† Solely till 1855, when I succeeded in inducing them to turn their attention to cultivation; but they much prefer their own wild life, and their cultivation is very limited.

‡ In using the term Bintenne, I refer to that portion of the division of Bintenne which belongs to the Badulla district. A larger portion of the same division is in Batticaloa.

3: Naish G-5 (1925) 1930 AX5 Vedda AX5

A Vedda Propitiation Ceremony.

The Veddas are the remnants of what may for convenience be referred to as the aboriginal inhabitants of Ceylon. They are found exclusively in that part of the island,—the greater part of it wild jungle country,—which is bounded on the north by the Verugal Aar, on the east by the sea, on the south by the Gal Oya, and on the west by the central mountain *massif* and the middle reaches of the Mahaweliganga. They vary greatly from group to group in the degree to which they have intermarried with their Sinhalese or Tamil neighbours, and have adopted those neigh-

[p. 187]

3:Naish G-5 (1925) 1930 AX5 Vedda AX5

written from memory aided by not very adequate notes made shortly after the ceremony, helps to fill up a lacuna in the hitherto published records of Vedda customs and ritual.

In June of 1925 I was engaged, as a junior administrative officer, in dealing with an outbreak of cholera among the Muslim tobacco cultivators in the neighbourhood of a remote coast Vedda village, about forty-four miles north of Batticaloa on the Batticaloa-Trincomalee coast road. Investigation by the medical officer with whom I was associated soon revealed the fact that the focus of the infection was a yet more remote inland district lying behind that part of the coast, and that to grapple effectively with the disease it would be necessary to evacuate the population of that area and to concentrate it, for the treatment of the actually sick and for the segregation of the "contacts," in the comparatively accessible locality where we had already established ourselves, not far from the spot where the first cases to be brought to our notice had occurred. I therefore found myself obliged, at short notice, to enlarge the camp of which I had already begun the construction, and in particular to begin the building of a new hospital hut on a more grandiose scale than that originally contemplated. For the work of construction, which consisted of the erection of a framework of jungle sticks and the covering of it with *cadjans*,—dried and plaited palm branches,—according to the familiar village method, it was necessary to enlist the services of the coast Veddas of the adjoining settlement. The villagers were naturally reluctant to engage in work which they not unreasonably supposed would expose them to the infection, and it called for much tact and persuasiveness on the part of the Chief Headman of the *pattu* to get them to do so. Fully realizing that, apart from all other considerations, the occurrence of even one case of cholera among them would effectively put a stop to all co-operation, the Chief Headman and I took, successfully as the event showed, every possible precaution to prevent such a catastrophe. Everything seemed to be going on without let or hindrance when the Chief Headman upset my calculations by announcing that the work must cease for twelve hours on the 8th of June, to enable the villagers to perform a ceremony in honour of the *Periya Devi*

4:Lewis N-5 (ca. 1906-1918) 1919
AX5 Vedda AX5

NOTES ON ANIMAL AND PLANT LIFE IN THE VEDDA COUNTRY.

By FREDERICK LEWIS, F.L.S.

(*With one map.*)

THE locality to which these notes apply represents the whole of the Maha Wedirata, the eastern half of the Buttala-Wedirata, and the southern half of the Panawa Pattu of the Eastern Province. 131

This large extent of country falls within part of Uva from the Monaragala range eastwards, and, as indicated above, part of the Eastern Province, or more specifically within the following rough boundaries. Starting from the conspicuous needle-pointed mountain called Wadinagala on the north, it follows the provincial limits of the Eastern Province to the point where it crosses the Government cart road from Potuvil to Muppane. From that point the road to Muppane is adopted as far at Potuvil, from thence following the sea-coast to Kumuna on the banks of the Kumbukkan river.

Next the Kumbukkan river is followed to a point called Kebilitte, at the foot of the imposing mass of rock shown on the Admiralty charts as "Chimney Hill." From here, a line drawn to Sirigala and thence to Wadinagala encloses the whole.

Within this area there is only one perennial river—the Kumbukkan-aar, which forms the southern limit of the region in question. The next largest stream is the Heda-oya, which in the north-east monsoon is a wide and formidable river. To the north the Lankiya-oya is an important stream, which is supplemented by several considerable branches that after uniting with it form a great branch of the Namal-oya. 133

The Govindu-oya, rising on the east flank of the "Westminster Abbey," forms a useful branch of the Karandi-oya that drains the eastern half of the Maha Wedirata country,

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

2. VEDDAS OF GUNNER'S QUOIN

THE ferry at Periathurai marked the end of our river journey. Some miles inland was the rock called Gunner's Quoin round which Veddas lived. 131

Under a bo-tree by the river was an image of Ganesha the pot bellied, elephant-headed Hindoo god with offerings of withered lotus flowers before him. In a temple hard by, were massive bells and drums that kept deafening accompaniment on many a ceremonial day when peacock-plumed men, in the self-imposed torture of skewered cheek and pronged back, bounded hither and thither in delirious dance; and here were the implements, prongs and tridents, these frenzied devotees had dedicated to their unhearing god.

At the Tamil village of Manampitiya we were regaled with an old man's tales of the Veddas. He told us of one Patabanda only recently dead, called *walige**-Patabanda owing to his habit of wearing his loin cloth long behind. It appeared this Vedda was a fine marksman. A *rata-mahatmaya*† once wishing to test his skill pointed to a small jak fruit on a tall tree and asked him to shoot. The arrow flew true and stuck in the fruit; whereupon the Vedda feigning anger said roughly, "Now give me my arrow; it was you who asked me to shoot". The timid chief proffered money which was disdainfully refused. The Vedda then taking another arrow hit the stem of the fruit so that it fell and enabled him to recover both arrow and fruit. Thus do men pass into fable. 114 173

We were told many another tale of Veddas and their ways, and of matters connected with the ancient ruins to be found on the rock; of an anchorite who had lived in a cave there unharmed by the bears; and of ancient Vedda kings captured by stratagem and fraud.

A walk of five miles the next morning brought us to the foot of Gunner's Quoin. I was now brimming with expectancy; for I was about to see for the first time the Veddas in their homes; that aboriginal people who had time and again attracted the scholars of Europe, and in whose veins flowed the oldest blood of the inhabitants of Ceylon. They were here when Wijeya came from India in 543 B.C. and founded the Sinhalese dynasty; long earlier, when that Buddha came who preached to his followers at Mahiyangana after having put to flight the Yakkhas (Veddas?); to an even still older beginning their ancestry went, to a time in the stone age when man vied for existence with prehistoric forms. 114

To-day hardly a Vedda true to the old traditions survives; not one that uses beaten bark for apparel, or depends for sustenance solely on the jungle. The inroads of civilisation and the effects of miscegenation with the neighbouring Sinhalese or Tamils are tending surely towards the extinction of the race. Yet, for all that, many of the old Vedda traits still survive in their degenerate descendants and these are still a link with an unfathomable past. 144 178

*Tail †Kandyan chief [P. 7]

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

CHAPTER II

THE VEDDAS OF HENEBEDDE

1. NUWARAGALA AND BEYOND

Talk not of temples, there is one
Built without hands, to mankind given;
Its lamps are the meridian sun
And all the stars of heaven,
Its walls are the cerulean sky,
Its floor the earth so green and fair,
The dome its vast immensity;
All Nature worships there.

VEDDER

For months we had nursed the prospect of a ramble in the Vedda country. Professor Seligmann, writing some nine years previously of the parts we hoped to visit, had said: 114

"We met with only four families who still led the life described by Bailey in 1863, and these were not among the Nilgalla but among the Nuwaragala hills.....After visiting so many decaying or degenerate communities a refreshing state of affairs was found at Sittala Wanniya. Here there were at least four families who were living the life their forefathers had lived for generations without perceptible change. They still found game, honey and yams in quantities sufficient not only to support life, but to have a surplus to barter with the Moormen or to take into the nearest Sinhalese village to exchange for iron, pots and occasional rice and coconuts."*

Thus it was that the Nuwaragala and Sittala Wanniya terrain came to be the object of our search. But reaching Maha Oya we received a rude awakening at the outset. We were questioning our guides regarding the route when to our surprise they told us that no Veddas now remained in Sittala Wanniya; that some few who had been at Galmede had either [130] died or gone eastward: and that, not certainly for two generations had Veddas been known to inhabit the Nuwaragala caves. To see Veddas, they said, we would have to go to Henebedde and Danigala, places within easier access of Bibile farther south. We had no choice but to change our plans and commit ourselves to the larger undertaking of working down through Henebedde to the high road at Bibile, after a journey of some sixty miles through the forest.

The jungle is as a home to some; they are never so happy as when they are amidst its delight and mystery. The bird songs, the sun glimmering

*The Veddas by C. G. and B. Z. Seligman [p. 11]

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

habit acquired as much through the necessity of directing their teams as from their solicitude to warn off wild beasts. The chief of the gang, as we said, was garrulous. His proclivity for vagrancy sustained a religious fervour, which betrayed itself in the incessant punctuations of his eloquence with such phrases, as "By the grace of Buddha," "If God wills," etc. With his future life he took no risks; for there was not a shrine in two provinces, Buddhistic or Hindoo, he had not visited. He shouldered his pingo impatient of departure, but lingered to honour us with a ingratiating glance; interpreting it rightly I gave him a pittance; but the same look bestowed on my friend (who had no sympathy for even amusing humbugs) was only wasted. He left us with his uproariousness ringing in our ears, and the regret, in my heart at least, that I was not of his company.

177 [131] The Danigalla Veddas were within easy reach of us at Nilgalla, the picturesque frontier of the Vedda country. But, so soon after our experience with the Henebedde Veddas, we were in no mood to repeat all over again the tedious palaver that contact with them would mean. For generations the classic show-Veddas of Ceylon, within easy reach of the Bibile resthouse on the high road, they and their ancestors had often been summoned to satisfy the thirst of scientists, or the curiosity of casual visitors. On such occasions they would appear clad in the scantiest rags, equipped with bows and arrows they seldom used, and, feigning ignorance of Sinhalese, would assume that moroseness and ferocity of expression they knew to be expected of them. What wonder then, that some of the impressions carried away, gave as true a picture of the real Vedda, as a performing animal of his wild brother?

One of the younger Veddas had accompanied us all the way from Henebedde to Bibile. He had been unfortunate enough to sell our cook some bear's grease and leopard oil; and no change being available in the jungle, he had no alternative but to accompany us some twenty-five miles, burdened into the bargain with a forty-pound tent! The look of blank wonderment he bestowed on the miracle of a moving automobile is a memory difficult to efface.

[pp. 21-33 include no information on the Vedda. - Analyst]

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

[pp. 21-33 not processed]

CHAPTER IV

VILLAGE VEDDAS AND JUNGLE SHRINES

And here were forests ancient as the hills
Enclosing sunny spots of greenery

COLERIDGE

1. THE EMBRACE OF THE TREES

BURIED in the jungle ten miles north-west of Maha Oya lies the old Vedda village of Omuna. Forest, unbroken by the meanest glade, intervenes between. At a pool we flush a brace of bronze-winged pigeons or set a-chirruping a covey of small birds; while every now and then the scurry of unseen feet tells that the woods are live with game. Jungles darken early; by five-thirty a cathedral gloom creeps to the songs of roosting birds: the shama throats a rambling lay, the grubbing pitta sounds a shrill call, the cuckoo wakes, like a curfew, the forest echoes, "while like a long-roll drummer the night-jar thrills the treen."

It is all but dark when, through a break in the trees, the hill of Omuna stands before us; and the clamour of resenting dogs and a welcoming fire tell us we have reached the limit of an arduous walk.

Where the Vedda is, there is the inevitable rock. The tie between them is intimate. To the life, animal and tree, on the timbered sides of the hill the Vedda is beholden for sustenance. The boulder-bound stream gives him water, and there lurk demons watchful for his undoing, and tutelary ancestral spirits. Nowhere is the relation between men and rock closer than at Omuna; for from the heart of the hill flows a spring that does not fail in the cruellest drought. Is it a wonder the place has for ages been favoured of the Veddas? But time the iconoclast breaks the oldest bonds; the half-Veddas* there to-day are not of the ancient stock; that died out some fifteen years ago.

Besides its association with the wild men, Omuna has other claims to interest. Like many another forest stronghold it is the site of ancient Buddhistic ruins—frescoed caves and headless, chest-battered Buddhas despoiled by treasure-hunters What induced the priests of old-time to seek such sanctuaries as this, it is hard to surmise; religious persecution perhaps, by their inveterate foes the Sivaite Tamils; or merely the claims of austere devotion. Be that as it may, it was in these fastnesses that the light of Buddhism was nursed when it flickered low, till, happening

*There is almost certainly no Vedda living to-day without Sinhalese blood in his veins. The term *half-Vedda* therefore may appear superfluous, but is used to designate Veddas who have intermarried with the Sinhalese and settled down to agricultural pursuits, the word *Vedda* being used for the wilder folk that depend mainly on the jungle for sustenance.

[p. 34]

5: Spitzel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5
Gypsies E15
Ceylon

V 751 accompanied him, now struck the bear with his axe and, when she turned on him, killed her. So much for charms; excellent things—provided a weapon is in your hands. "Trust in God," says the Arabic proverb, "but fasten thy camel securely."

G 361 Uhana was a surprise; the place gave every promise of being in a few years a flourishing settlement, thanks to Government grants of land, cattle and grain on easy terms. Luck at last! Near Uhana was a gipsy camp. Wadinagala gave us first promise of these people; but like a mirage they had faded from stage to stage of our journey, leaving only their camp refuse to mock us. Now, here they were, within two miles of us. We stayed over the next morning that we might visit them. As we neared their encampment we met a man who told us that he had passed them on their way to another camp. They who had been here for weeks must needs pack and begone within an hour of our visit! They were bound, the man said, for a place a mile and a half away. We followed, but did not find them there; instead, was another tantalizer who assured us that we would find them on a knoll by a stream a mile and a half beyond. We proceeded, painfully aware that every step of our way must be retraced in the broiling sun before we could earn our lunch. Disappointment again! Almost tearful with frustration and fatigue, we had thrown ourselves down, when a kindly individual came to our aid.

"Rest here," he said. "I shall go forward and see. Come if you hear me 'hoo.' I can tell of their presence some distance away by the crowing of their cocks and the clatter of their camp." We waited and were rewarded.

G [492] [230] [343] On an undulant opening, reminiscent of Somerset pastures, we found the gipsies. They had just unloaded their pack-bulls and were setting up camp under the blazing sky of noon, disdainful of the shelter of the cool environing jungle—the very antithesis of Vedda ways. Cattle and fowls flecked the glade; boys led goats into the forest. Women, graceful as Dianas, were erecting talipot shelters over collected household goods and communal stacks of grain. Tall men, lithe and sinewy as greyhounds, with mongrels at their heels, carried naked babes. Children, reading favour in our faces, essayed shrill nasal choruses clapping arms to chest. The chief, a quietly curious, grizzled man, with a care-free air G 622 bred of the freedom and independence of his life, held in play a vicious cobra just captured. He summed the gipsy life in a sentiment savouring of Borrow: "What are we?" he said. "Children of the open ways, bronzed by the sun, soaked by the rain, born on the trail, buried on the trail. That is our life." They had a sambur spear among them, and G 411 apparently only one man adept in its use; but that spear, their little 224 dogs and their own untiring sinews were match enough for any sambur once started.

V 361 From Uhane to Kotelinda by way of hill-girdled Bokkebedda in the drenching rain. Here, at a glance, we noticed crude little Vedda huts amidst those of the Sinhalese villagers. We were now among the hills of Madana long famed for Veddas; but to-day their caves are only tenanted by bears. Up to now we had traversed a stretch of country V 103 designated on the maps Maha-Veddi-Ratta (Great Vedda Country)—an empty name of about as much significance at the present time as the term Cinnamon Gardens applied to Colombo. Kotelinda lies in the V 131 centre of a region that is to-day the last stronghold of the Veddas—that

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

triangle bounded on the south by the Gal Oya: on the west by the Bibile-Batticaloa road: and on the east by the coast road. Within this space are found the Veddas of Danigala, Henebedda and Bingoda, besides the few about Kotelinda, Divulana and Serangamadu. If to this tract were added that to the west and north of the Bibile-Batticaloa road, between it and the Mahaweli-ganga, we shall have embraced the Veddas of Bintenne, Gunner's Quoin, and other scattered settlements, and accounted for every Vedda extant—a mere handful of people in all.

Kaurala of Kotelinda was the first Vedda worthy of the name we had encountered on this long journey. He was a Bingoda Vedda of the Morana *waruge*, but had spent most of his days at Bandaradua now derelict. He lived with his family in a crude hut in the jungle; his sole weapons were an axe, a bow and arrows. He was a simple soul, laughing uproariously at one moment, and the next assuming that troubled gravity so characteristic of his race. He knew every inch of his jungles; there was no tree, stream, or stone once passed which he could not instantly recognise again. This instinct and the sun were his sole means of orientation. We tried to press him into service, but he refused. "How can I come?" he said, tossing head and arms like a windmill. "I am a lone man. I live in the jungle. I am only a Vedda. If I go, who is there to look after my children? See here, now," pointing to the damaged trees about his hut; "this is what the *botukandas** have done. How can I come?"

Our deviation to Kotelinda was in vain. We had hoped to cut across the hills of Madana to Galmede; but the path had long been absorbed into the forest. We had therefore to double back to Bokkebedda, and thence strike north, through Gonagalla, to Divulana. With our usual ill-luck on this trip, we caught our fifth thunderstorm. It dropped plumb on us and worried us all the way; while in the unscathed beyond, over the treed parkland, the sunset wrought a panorama of opal and pearl, touching to glory the austere peak of Friar's Hood, queen of the distant hills.

*Elephants.

CHAPTER VI

VEDDAS OF BINGODA

I. BINGODA HOMES

Innumerable years had flown,
Since first the chisel in her hand
Necessity, the sculptor, took,
And in her spacious meaning planned
These forms, and that eternal look.

L. BINYON

[97] [101] CONCEDE me three points and I shall attempt to show that there exist in Ceylon to-day Veddas worthy of the name. Language, apparel and weapons are the concessions I ask.

Let us begin by confessing, that the Veddas we shall tell of have no pure language of their own, but merely a patois, in which Sinhalese words predominate and Vedda words are few; their clothing is not the traditional 291 leaf or threshed *riti* bark, but fragments of foul rag affording, if anything, less cover; the weapons they favour are guns (of a type almost as 411 dangerous to user as to quarry) and not bows and arrows which they employ only in sore necessity.

Vital issues, you will say, which should deprive this people of their name. But language, dress and arms may change without materially altering, for a time at least, ancient customs and primeval instincts.

101 The word Vedda originally meant hunter; and a people supreme in jungle-craft, always capable of gleaning from the unfriendly forests a sufficiency for their needs and utterly incompetent to husband even the primitive agriculture of the *chena*, has surely a claim to the name.

224 [411] [427] It must not be supposed that every Vedda possesses a gun; far from it; occasionally there may be a single weapon to a whole clan. The usual thing is for the Sinhalese or Moors to lend their guns to these superb trackers, who never waste a shot and seldom return without their quarry, a large share of which goes by agreement to the owner of the gun.

114 Of my first accidental meeting with these Veddas amid the hills of Galmede, I have already told. Barely four months had elapsed before I found myself renewing their acquaintance; this time with set purpose.

Arriving at the forest village of Mullegama, sacred to Buddhists, and abounding in lime groves and Moors, I was fortunate enough to run up against my friend Kaurala of Kottelinde, who, so difficult of acquisition before, now became our willing guide.

●131 Bingoda, the home of our Veddas, is some three miles from Mullegama, and lies on the Dhungolla Oya, a tributary of the Magalavatan Aar which connects Bingoda with Galmede ten miles away—all in the circuit of

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

these Veddas. Bingoda is not all Vedda; essentially it is a Sinhalese *chena* village of about six or eight families, within a stone's throw of which are the crude huts belonging to the few surviving Veddas. Through a tangle of overgrown scrub we reach them; they are not so numerous that we cannot easily name every single Vedda there.

Three we have met before, Suthubanda, Gama and Badapissa; it was they who led us such a chase at Galmede. In the first hut we find the swarthy Gama and his comely young wife Kalu—his fifth experiment in matrimony: and he barely twenty-five! Not far from this is Suthubanda's abode, in which are his wife, the skinny Thuthi, mother by previous marriage of Gamma; their two little boys, Handuna and Naida and girls Kumi and Punji. Handuna is the quaintest brat imaginable; he is ash-coloured from top to toe, through crouching by the hearth all night to keep warm his naked body; for, all he has for cover is a little strip of loin cloth drooping erratically from a slack waist-string that sags well below his nates; his rotund abdomen accommodates an enormous spleen; with hands crossed over shrugged shoulders to keep the chill away, he gazes quizzically at you.

Away from these two homes, across the stream, is the only other Vedda hut. Unlike those of Suthubanda and Gama which are of wattle and bast, this is a sadly dilapidated mud structure once occupied by a Moor. It is the most pathetic and curious menage here, and belongs to Kaira brother of Suthubanda. His wife Randunna, a hideous squint-eyed thing, is mother by a previous husband to Heenthuthi the twelve-year old wife of Badapissa (Muthua), Kaira's younger brother! A more ridiculous pair it would be hard to find: the wife a mere child, the husband barely more. The Veddas favour such early marriages, saying that, growing up thus together, the two learn to love each other well. Be that as it may, it does seem a most piteous travesty of human matings. Huddled by the hearth and shivering with ague, is old Thanthi mother of the clan, and wife of the dead chief Neela. And, lastly, we have here the most pathetic figure in all Bingoda—Kummi, a girl of fifteen, dust-besmeared, ulcerated, crippled, and so scantily clad that she is ashamed to stand lest she reveal her nakedness. A misery to herself and others, she sits apart with face shyly lowered, taking timid glances every now and then, like some wild thing, from large black lustrous eyes that might have shone befittingly on the face of some proud beauty.

To these, though they now dwelt apart at Mullegama, we must add Kaurala and his family, for he too was of Bingoda, and is maternal uncle of Suthubanda. By his two wives, Balli and Ranni, he has four little sons, Kaira Vanniya, Heratha, Kalua and Sela; and two daughters, Ranni and Dingi.

These details, though perhaps tedious, serve to bring out vividly the intimate inter-relationships of the Veddas, their apparent disregard of appearance or age in their choice of wives, the promiscuity of life in their one-roomed homes—mother, child and father all lying huddled together in a little space. For all that it must not be assumed that Veddas are devoid of a moral code. A man may have more than one wife, it is true; and, if it pleases him, he may cast her aside like a worn garment; but to each man his own woman while she is his; that is the Vedda law which all respect.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

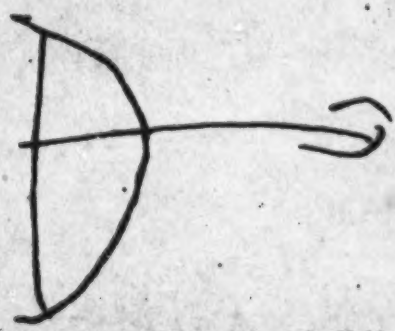
4. VEDDA JUNGLES

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them

ISAIAH.

THE forests we were now in were the immemorial haunts of the Veddas of Bingoda, Galmede and Sittala Wanniya. They stretched from Bingoda to Newaragala, and included such famous Vedda hills as Walimbe (Friar's Hood) and Bandaradua. The Magalavatan Aar cleaves this country on its way to Unichi tank. The jungle is virginal, but one is surprised to find here an occasional guava bearing luscious fruit, and much wild cinnamon. *Palu* and *veera*, so abundant in the more southern forests, is wanting here.

Nowhere is the Vedda more at home than in this wilderness, intersected by game trails only known to him and wild animals, and studded with the rocks that hold his caves. This land is all their wealth. By old Vedda law it is divided into *panguas* or shares, marked off by such natural landmarks as streams, rocks, or conspicuous trees scored with the *dhunu hena* (bow mark) distorted beyond recognition with age. The *panguas* of the Bingoda Veddas are six:—(1) Madana-gama: (2) Marana-pangua: (3) Kumburu-wella-gama (kuda and maha): (4) Bingoda: (5) Kakalana-bokke: (6) Bandaradua. Of these, the first three are included under the name Galmede and are now the property of Suthu Banda; the last three are Kaurala's. Each of these divisions, in days of greater prosperity, had its own chieftain.



Dhunu-hena or bow mark drawn by Vedda

It is to the credit of these Veddas that they alone of all the Veddas in Ceylon can still name their shares, indicate their boundaries, and observe the traditional law of non-transgression, hunting only in their allotted spheres. Suthu Banda, for instance, would not take the swiftlets' nests on Walimbe because they were Kaurala's by right; nor would he break the hives beyond Newaragala because those lands, once Vedda, have now lapsed to the Sinhalese.

Land goes to the eldest child whether son or daughter; failing them to the nephew. In the old days the proofs of inheritance were a white stone (*kirivanagala*) and molar tooth, bound together with a wisp of human hair; later the *ola* supplanted it; and still later a paper document issued by Government, and so carefully hidden away that it was invariably eaten by termites! These people, it would appear, were wiser than Government in their choice of a seizin.

[p. 79]

5: Spinel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5
Sinhalese AX4

S
538 Wild are the wastes that surround Sorabora Wewa. Through a channel of cut stones her waters feed the fields. To the temple of Bintenne her lotus blooms are borne. Eyes that have not beheld her, can they worship truly?

On Na-nithule trees the white cranes brood in sleep: their bills not with silver but rich gold gleaming; their plumes, though not gay with colour, are bright with a satin sheen. The cranes of Sorabora that move in the sedge.

In Horabora Wewa fine *olu** clusters grow. To gather these come women fair and lovely. They will roast them red and black and set them before us; but, alas! to eat with the *olu* rice, we have no meat.

Deep under the water the good yams lie; on the surface above, the leaves swing lightly round. The flowers unfold to the dew and the rain—pearl-studded shades for the fishes below.

S
173 The dagaba, the tank and the pilgrim path are associated in legend:—
773 Dutthagamani (101—77 B.C.), the most renowned of Sinhalese kings, lived at one time at Mahanuwara, as Alutnuwara was then called†. Being as devout as he was brave, he set about to complete the Mahiyangana-thupa or dagaba. In those days there were giants or *yodhayas*; and Dutthagamani had under him one conspicuous *yodhaya* named Bullatha whose daily duty it was to milk a cow at Kiripatiya across the mountains, and to make for the king thirty chews of betel, one for each hour of the Sinhalese day. In addition to these appointed tasks, he contrived to carry out clandestinely two other works which were to win him great merit and incidentally death. For, on his way back from Kiripatiya, laden with milk for the king, he brought each day a great stone which he laid down on the steep mountain side, and so constructed the steps (*gal-padi*) of the pilgrim path; hence is the hill called Galpadihela. He also found time to pile up the great bund of Horabora Wewa, digging up a few shovelfuls of earth each day. The work being completed he threw his spade into the tank.

Works of this magnitude could not long be kept secret; and soon it reached the ears of the king that his *yodhaya* had constructed a vast tank. Dutthagamani, who in the meanwhile had completed the Mahiyangana dagaba, visited Horabora Wewa, and when he saw it, recognised at once that here was the more virtuous accomplishment, being a greater boon to the poor people.

"Give me," he said to the *yodhaya*, "the merit that is yours for the building of this tank; and I will give you that which is mine for restoring the dagaba."

Bullatha refused. He was killed and his body thrown into the tank. Then the waters blossomed; from his head sprang the *olu* (head) flowers, from his eyes the lotus fruit, and from his limbs the lotus stalks.

V
131 Bintenne, as all this country is called, has always been the home of Veddas. "Worse than a Vedda of Bintenne," is a term of opprobrium common even to-day. Were the present Veddas of Bintenne any wilder than those we had already seen? We suspected, not; for a glance at the map showed this country to be better supplied with bridle-paths than most of the jungles we had already explored.

We had not gone many miles from Alutnuwara before our eyes convinced us that even among those avowedly Sinhalese there was much

Nymphæa lotus or water lily; the roots, stalks, yams, fruit, and seeds are all eaten. And so are those of the large-flowered lotus *Nelumbium speciosum*—sacred bean.

†The present rest-house is said to mark the site of his palace.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

interfusion of Vedda blood—the apathetic look, the scanty beard, were unmistakably there. The area we had to traverse was not extensive, hemmed in, as it was, by the Bibile-Maha Oya road on the one hand and Mahaweli on the other. It is five miles from Alutnuwara to Arawatta; six miles from that to the Ulhitiya Oya; thence seven to Beligalla which is within four to six miles of Bulugahadena and Dambana, the Vedda haunts of to-day. The going is through forest comparatively well peopled; and *chenas* are frequently met with; changing from year to year, these often absorb the path and obliterate it, causing deviations which lead astray even guides conversant with the country a few months previously. 131

We were nearing Bulugahadena when we met our first Vedda of these parts—a tall, picturesque fellow with ear-rings, shouldering his bow stave with a small gourdful of honey slung on its end. Unspoilt, reserved and natural, in contrast to his fellows whom we afterwards met, he was the finest Vedda we saw in Bintenne. 101 [301] [157]

In an environment, not of virgin forest, but of derelict *chenas* we found the Veddas of Bulugahadena. They lived scattered about, a hut or two to each *chena*, and not in groups as one so often sees; the explanation we were given for this was not the obvious one that *chenas* were apparently easier of acquisition here than elsewhere, but that it served to keep the families apart and prevent social entanglements, Veddas being very jealous of their women. [361] [626] 152]

There was no reserve about these people. As we approached each hut, the men, armed with axes, bows and arrows, came out and greeted us vociferously in the Vedda language; Sinhalese they affected not to know. Their women were mostly sullen and silent; but one at least gave us a better reception than her husband did. Here and there a sickly wretch craved for medicine. 576 [411]

Their huts, made of bark slats and wattle, were too well built for Vedda habitations; they had not that crudity and unkemptness so characteristic of the huts of the wilder Veddas, and most of them were finished off with a neat fence-work. There was no lack of *kurrukkan* and maize here; and on the whole they seemed a fairly prosperous and contented community. 342 [241]

The Veddas of Dambana, who lived four miles away, were much the same as those of Bulugahadena; and so were the others we met scattered about these jungles. One lot we found picturesquely grouped in a rock-shelter, reproducing to perfection the old cave life; but they were obviously there for our benefit! 101 361

Of these Veddas, considered as a whole, we may say that we had never before seen so many of them as on this short trip of barely a week. On previous journeys, after having traversed miles and miles of jungle, we had met only a Vedda here and a Vedda there, never more than a dozen in all, often but one or two. But in Bintenne we saw no less than about fifty good specimens. Though they were obviously sophisticated by their nearness to Badulla and the many occasions on which their representatives had been on show, Vedda blood is still strong in Bintenne. This is the place to come to if one wishes to pick up the few words that are left of the Vedda language, and the art of making bows and arrows; but apart from that, these people are too civilised to be interesting. 161 177

One episode we experienced here is worth recalling. Two Veddas, better disposed towards us than the rest, one with his lip all askew from 224

18: Kleiweg De Zwaan E-5 (1906-1910) 1925 OB1 Indonesia OB1
Prehistoric Philippines OA3
Vedda AX5

found in Philippine caves. This particular /106/ skull seems to indicate a race of people of short stature, sub-brachycephalic, with receding forehead, an arcus supraorbitals which protrudes only slightly; a very prognathous and also very platyrrhine race. Sanchez believes that this race preceded the present Negrito groups.

However, it appears to me that this conclusion is very premature, based as it is on only one skull of which one does not even know its correct age. (1)

1. D. Sanchez y Sanchez, "Un cráneo humano prehistorico de Manilla /A Prehistoric Human Skull of Manila/," Memorias de la Real Soc. española de Historia Natural, Vol. XI, 1921.

Another racial element of the Indonesian Archipelago is the Vedda type, which probably arrived there later than the Negritos and which has become known mainly by the explorations of the Sarasins, Rudolph Martin, and Skeat and Blagden.

Paul and Fritz Sarasin have made a careful study of the Vedda tribes of the island of Ceylon. In their excellent book Die Weddas von Ceylon und die sie umgebenden Völkerschaften (Wiesbaden, 1892 and 1893), one can find a very extensive description of these tribes, both from an ethnographical and anthropological angle. The Veddas of Ceylon are a very rare racial element /107/ who lived in the

131 eastern part of that island in separate hordes and families. Nowadays, these Veddas can only be found in the plains of East Ceylon which territory is bordered in the south by the Arukan Aru River: it is commonly called "Mahaweddarata" meaning "Great Vedda Land." This name, however, has at present very little meaning because one can hardly find any real Veddas in that part of the country [144] but rather a population having more Singhalese than Vedda blood in their veins.

177 The Veddas of our times have for the greater part adopted the culture of the higher civilised population of the island of Ceylon. Really primitive Veddas hardly exist any more.

141 The Sarasins describe the Vedda people as one of short
131 stature; for the Veddas of the central districts they found an average height of 155.4 centimeters, for the tribes of the east coast one of 155.8 centimeters, and for the Veddas of the Wewatte territory one of 160.7 centimeters. However,
144 if from the number of Veddas of the central districts those
141 individuals are eliminated which show signs of interbreeding with other elements or can be regarded as such, then one will find a much shorter stature for those Veddas who seem to be of purer race; their average male's height is 153.3 centimeters, /108/ with a minimum of 146.0 centimeters and a maximum of 160.0 centimeters. On the average, the women are about 10 centimeters shorter than the males.

006 Characteristic physical features of the Veddas are: